

Remarks

The Office Action of October 26, 2005, and the references cited therein have been carefully considered.

It is noted that although the claims as previously presented are believed to be allowable over the patent to Cotter cited by the Examiner in rejecting the claims, in this Amendment, the claims have been amended to even more precisely define the invention and clearly define same over the Cotter reference, and in particular, the manner in which the Examiner was applying the Cotter reference in the last Office Action. Accordingly, each of the independent claims 1, 9 and 18 has been amended to positively recite that the stripper opening, which is used to guide the die, has a constant diameter.

The Examiners, Mr. Phong H. Nguyen and Mr. Timothy Eley are thanked for the courteous personal interview afforded undersigned counsel on January 25, 2006. During the interview, the differences between each of the independent claims 1, 9 and 18 and the Cotter reference were specifically discussed. In particular, it is pointed out that the present invention is directed to a punch for green sheets, wherein the punching portion (26) of the die has very small diameter compared to the remainder of the die, and the immediately subsequently larger diameter portion (25) is guided in the stripper bore (24) disposed in the stripper (21), which has an outer face facing the lower tool part (22). Note that with this arrangement, the stripper opening or bore (24) is much larger than the diameter of the hole to be punched, and consequently is larger than the diameter of the bore (7) provided in the lower tool part (27). With the arrangement according to the invention, the intermediate portion of the die or operative portion (25) is guided in the stripper bore (24) that, as is conventional for stripper bores, has a constant diameter. With a die of the type disclosed, with a very small diameter of the punching part (26) relative to the diameter of the remainder of the die, guidance for the die must be provided adjacent the green sheet (32) to be punched. This clearly is not the case according to the Cotter patent.

The patent to Cotter discloses a stripper (93') for a punch, which like the present invention, has a die with three different diameter portions. However,

guidance of the intermediate portion (28) of the die does not take place in the stripper bore (unnumbered) in the lower end wall of the stripper (93') facing the lower tool part. Rather, guidance of the intermediate portion (28) of the die is provided in a bore (86), which, as can more clearly be seen in Figure 3, is disposed at a distance from the stripper bore.

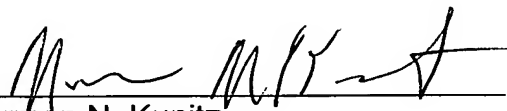
In applying the Cotter reference to the independent claims, the Examiner has taken the position that the entire interior of the stripper (93') can be considered to be the claimed "stripper opening" on which the claim language is readable. As can clearly be seen, the interior of the stripper (93') of Cotter includes a number of different sized diameters. Although undersigned counsel does not agree with this interpretation of the claimed "stripper opening", in order to advance the prosecution of the application, it was agreed at the conference that if each of the independent claims was amended to positively recite that the claimed "stripper opening" had a "constant diameter", which of course is the case with regard to the stripper opening (24) of the present application, all the claims would overcome and be allowable over the Cotter reference. It was further agreed that such an amendment would be entered.

As indicated above, each of the independent claims 1, 9 and 18 has been amended, as agreed at the conference, to recite a "constant diameter stripper opening". Accordingly, in view of the agreements reached at the conference, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of all of the pending claims, i.e. claims 1-20, under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is respectfully requested.

In view of the above, it is submitted that, with the above amendments, all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Such action and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully requested.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that the prosecution of the application would be advanced by a further personal interview, the Examiner is invited to telephone undersigned counsel to arrange for such an interview.

Respectfully submitted,
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